

Message Text

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PAGE 01 VIENNA 03227 221749Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 ACDA-07
/084 W

-----230734Z 075317 /21

R 221503Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1496
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SY, AU
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION QUESTIONS KREISKY VISIT TO SYRIA

1. CHANCELLOR KREISKY ANNOUNCED APRIL 19 THAT HE WOULD PAY
OFFICIAL VISIT TO SYRIA IN EARLY MAY, PRIMARILY WITH VIEW
TOWARD INTENSIFYING BILATERAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS BUT ALSO TO
UPDATE HIS KNOWLEDGE OF POLITICAL SITUATION IN MIDDLE EAST.
KREISKY SAID HE DOES NOT EXPECT SYRIANS TO RAISE QUESTION OF
AUSTRIAN ARMS EXPORTS, RECENT CONTROVERSY OVER WHICH HAS LET
TO PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO ACTIVITIES OF DEFENSE MINISTER
LUETGENDORF AND AUSTRIAN ARMS DEALER ALOIS WEICHSELBAUMER.
KREISKY SAID IT WAS POSSIBLE, HOWEVER, THAT MOTOR VEHICLE
SALES OF STEYR-DAMILER-PUCH COMPANY WOULD BE DISCUSSED.
(COMPANY IS ALSO INVOLVED IN WEICHSELBAUMER AFFAIR.)

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2. OPPOSITION PEOPLE'S PARTY LEADER JOSEF TAUS ANNOUNCED
APRIL 20 HE WOULD CALL MEETING OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COUNCIL TO LOOK INTO REASONS FOR KREISKY'S TRIP.
REFERRING TO ARMS SCANDAL INVESTIGATION, TAUS SAID HE
FOUND IT PECULIAR CHANCELLOR WOULD GO TO SYRIA IN
PRESENT SITUATION, ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT DISCOUNT
POSSIBILITY KREISKY HAD GOOD REASON.

3. SOME PAPERS NOTE THAT KREISKY ONLY RECENTLY VISITED SYRIA AS CHAIRMAN OF SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL FACT-FINDING MISSIONS TO MIDDLE EAST AND STATE THAT PEOPLE'S PARTY IS HARDLY LIKELY TO ACCEPT CHANCELLOR'S ASSURANCES THAT ARMS SCANDAL, WHICH COULD RESULT IN DISMISSAL OF DEFENSE MINISTER, WILL NOT BE DISCUSSED. PAPERS STATE OPPOSITION SEES OBVIOUS CONNECTION BETWEEN TRIP AND SCANDAL.

4. COMMENT: MFA OFFICIAL TOLD EMBOFF THAT VISIT, SCHEDULED FOR MAY 4-6, RETURNS THAT OF SYRIAN PREMIER AL-AYOUBI TO AUSTRIA IN 1974. WHEN EMBOFF NOTED THAT SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE BUREAU WAS TO DISCUSS HUMAN RIGHTS AND MEDITERRANEAN ISSUES IN MEETING AT ROME THIS JUNE, MFA OFFICIAL RESPONDED THAT VISIT WOULD INDEED PROVIDE USEFUL UPDATE ON MIDDLE, EASTERN POLITICAL SITUATION FOR USE IN THAT CONTEXT, BUT THE PURPOSE OF VISIT, AS KREISKY INDICATED, WAS PRINCIPALLY TO PROMOTE BILATERAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS. HE SAID OPPOSITION'S DECISION TO QUESTION EFFICACY OF VISIT IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL WOULD NOT ALTER PLANS FOR VISIT. MEEHAN

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